DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 025 CG 032 517

AUTHOR	DiBlasi, Francis Paul; Fronheiser, April; Baker, Kathleen; Fontanez, Mary; Fulmer, Kim; Ryckebusch, Jenna; Ellis, Trisha; Miller, Heather; Carey, Brandi; Gorton, Laura; Chambliss, Catherine
TITLE	Married Parents' Perceptions of the Specific Costs and Benefits Associated with Maternal Employment.
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	23p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Dual Career Family; *Employed Parents; *Mothers; *Parent Attitudes; *Parent Child Relationship; *Predictor Variables
IDENTIFIERS	Risk Factors

ABSTRACT

This investigation explored parents' attitudes about the risks and benefits associated with maternal employment. The responses of husbands and wives from single paycheck versus dual paycheck families were compared. Participants in this study were 109 mothers and 96 fathers given a survey assessing their views on maternal employment. This study found that the participants' attitudes about maternal employment were generally congruent with their chosen lifestyles. It is unknown whether this is because the participants' beliefs shaped their family choices, or if living a certain lifestyle shaped participants' attitudes on these matters. (Contains 137 references.) (GCP)

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by
Francis Paul DiBlasi
April Fronheiser
Kathleen Baker
Mary Fontanez
Kim Fulmer
Jenna Ryckebusch
Trisha Ellis
Heather Miller
Brandi Carey
Laura Gorton
Catherine Chambliss

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Married Parents' Perceptions of the Specific Costs and Benefits Associated with Maternal Employment

Francis Paul DiBlasi, April Fronheiser, Kathleen Baker, Mary Fontanez, Kim Fulmer, Jenna Ryckebusch, Trisha Ellis, Heather Miller, Brandi Carey, Laura Gorton, and Catherine Chambliss, Ph.D.

Ursinus College

2003

Abstract

This investigation explored parents' attitudes about the risks and benefits associated with maternal employment. The responses of husbands and wives from single paycheck versus dual paycheck families were compared. Participants in this study were 109 mothers and 96 fathers given a survey assessing their views on maternal employment (Beliefs About the Consequences of Maternal Employment for Children scale, Greenberger et al., 1988).

Independent samples t-tests were performed to compare the benefits and costs subscale scores for fathers from single paycheck families and those for fathers from two-paycheck families. A significant difference was found for both summary scales. On the benefits subscale, fathers from two-paycheck families perceived greater advantages associated with maternal employment than did fathers from single paycheck families. On the costs subscale, fathers from two-paycheck families perceived fewer disadvantages associated with maternal employment than did fathers from single paycheck.

Similarly, independent samples t-tests were performed to compare the benefits and costs subscale scores for mothers from single paycheck and those for mothers from two-paycheck families. A significant difference was found for the benefits summary scale. On the benefits subscale, mothers from two-paycheck families perceived greater advantages associated with maternal employment than did mothers from single paycheck families. No significant difference was found for the costs summary scale between mothers from single-paycheck and two-paycheck families.

This study found that the participants' attitudes about maternal employment were generally congruent with their chosen lifestyles. It is unknown whether this is because the participants' beliefs shaped their family choices, or if living a certain lifestyle shaped participants' attitudes on these matters. On many of the BACMEC items, the responses from men whose wives did not work were outliers from the rest of the groups.

Introduction

One of the fastest growing social trends in the U.S. has involved the entry of women into the labor force, in particular women with children. . The number of dual-paycheck married couples recently surpassed "traditional" families by three-to-one (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998). This has spurred considerable interest in the effects of maternal employment on parenting and the relationships infants form with caregivers (e.g., Barling, 1990; Cowan, C.P. & Cowan, P.A., 1992; Gottfired, A.E., & Gottfried, Aw.W., 1988; Lerner & Galambos, 1991). After almost 50 years of rigorous study by a multitude of researchers, very few clear patterns of effects have been observed.

Over the past 25 years, many studies have been done to examine the hypothesis that a history of extensive non-parental care leads to insecure–attachment. Many researchers have explored whether the nature of the relationship that develops between an infant and mother in the first year of infancy might be negatively influenced by repeated separations that arise when a mother is employed outside the home. Early, extensive non-maternal care in the first year of infancy has been modestly related to insecure infant-mother attachments in several studies (e.g., Belsky, 1990; Lamb, Sternberg, & Prodromidis, 1992; Roggman, Langlois, Hubbs-Tiat, & Reiser-Danner, 1994).

Ju and Chung (2000) examined the relationships between maternal employment and school children's educational aspirations in Korea. The sample consisted of 1,294 fifth and tenth graders and their mothers. The students were attending public schools and living in two-parent families. The results of this study showed that children whose mothers were working full-time had lower educational aspirations, compared with those whose mothers were not working. There was no difference found in the educational aspirations for the children of mothers working part-time and those whose mothers were non-employed.

The findings are largely inconsistent with most previous research in the United States, which has found that part-time maternal employment positively influenced various children's educational outcomes, while full-time maternal employment had no effect on children's educational outcomes (Beyer, 1995; Hoffman, 1980, 1989; Muller, 1995; Paulson, 1996; Zaslow, Rabinovich, & Suwalsky, 1991).

However, another U.S. study (Gorton, McCauley, Farrell, Nyce, Johnson, Covert, Strauss, Maggi, Fields, Eddy, Denis, Hemperly, Fronheiser, & Chambliss, 2003) obtained findings contradicting Ju and Chung (2000). In this exploration of urban and suburban middle school and college students, part time maternal employment was associated with the lowest educational and professional aspirations of students. Students whose mothers worked full time had the highest ambitions, while those whose mothers were non-employed expressed intermediate aspirations.

Harr (1999) examined the relationship between maternal employment and children's academic and social adjustment. Children of part-time employed mothers demonstrated better adjustment than children of full-time employed mothers, when mothers resumed working after their children were school-aged. Stepwise multiple regressions revealed that parents' education levels overshadowed maternal occupational status in the prediction of children's adjustment. A final number of stepwise regressions indicated that children of mothers satisfied with their life roles, particularly their parenting roles, outperformed children of less satisfied mothers.

The Harr (1999) study suggests the importance of considering parents' attitudes toward and reactions to maternal employment. Several recent studies have investigated maternal

employment from the standpoint of parents. Several studies have explored effects of maternal employment on the mothers themselves. Childbirth is a very significant event that distinguishes women's careers from men's careers (Marshall, 1987). While both marital partners are likely to experience increased family demands with the birth of a child, parental responsibilities usually fall disproportionately on married women (Kamo, 1988).

To manage the increased responsibilities associated with parenting a newborn, a new mother may leave the workforce. While this decision may offer more time to manage childcare, and possibly provide higher quality childcare than a daycare facility might afford, it decreases the family's standard of living. A non-employed mother may negatively affect her future employment opportunities and future earnings (Lehrer, 1992), as well as her job involvement and organization commitment (Gould & Werbel, 1983). Leaving the workforce also often reduces a mother's level of social contact and support.

On the other hand, if maternal employment is chosen, the new mother is likely to experience role overload and family conflicts. Research shows that employed women are more likely to experience both work and family conflicts than employed men (Duxberry, Higgins, & Lee, 1994; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz, & Beutell, 1989). The higher levels of personal stress may negatively affect career satisfaction (Peluchette, 1993; Aryee & Luk, 1996) and may have negative costs and consequences on marital satisfaction (Schumm & Bugaighis, 1986).

Holcomb (1998) argued that despite little empirical evidence, the media has conveyed negative and false information about dual-income families, and working mothers in particular. Dual-income couples are often depicted as lacking time for one another and their children, and as being selfish and materialistic. Their children are often portrayed as desperate for love and attention while being cared for by surrogate childcare providers. The media also often disseminates disturbing, exaggerated, and incorrect information about the outcomes for children of two-paycheck families (Holcomb, 1998; Galinsky, 1999).

In the past several decades, a significant number of researchers have concluded that maternal employment itself has very little effect on children (Galinsky, 1999) and when there is an effect noted, it is generally positive. Research has constantly and consistently reported that maternal employment does not affect the bond between the mother and child (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1997), does not weaken the influence of parents on children (Fuligni, A.S., Galinsky, E., & Poris, M., 1996; NICHD, 1997), and does not influence children's evaluation of the mothers' quality of care (Galinsky, 1999). Maternal employment effects depend upon many factors, including parental attitudes towards maternal employment, the income of the family, the mother's sensitivity to her children, quality of the parents' jobs, and the quality of child care (Fuligni et al., 1995; Galinsky, 1999).

Haddock & Bowling (2001) found that many dual-income couples experience difficulties. First, members of many dual-income couples, especially working mothers, experience concern and guilt about their family arrangements. This guilt is a natural response to having one's own choices, motivation, and quality of parenting skills questioned by others (Holcomb, 1998). The second difficulty that appears in many dual-income families involves renegotiating traditional family roles and expectations in the marital relationship.

Werbel (1998) looked at the influence of factors such as personal values, perceived spouse preference, and family income on women's intent to be employed following childbirth. He hypothesized that women with more traditional gender role values, and those whose spouses had higher income would express lower pre-birth maternal employment intent. Women with

greater job involvement, higher income, and spouse's preferring their employment were expected to report greater pre-birth maternal employment intent. Pre-birth maternal employment intent was expected to mediate the relationships between maternal employment and personal value variables, family income, and spouse preference.

Traditional gender roles values and marital partner's perceived maternal employment preference were significantly associated with maternal employment intent. The results failed to support the hypothesized links between a woman's employment intent and either job involvement or marital partner's income. However, marital partner's income was negatively associated with actual maternal employment. Interestingly, mother's income was not significantly associated with maternal employment intent. The results supported the notion that maternal employment intent mediated the relationship between maternal employment and traditional gender role values and perceived marital partner's preference for maternal employment.

In addition to studies on the effects of maternal employment on children and women, several researchers have elected to focus on the effects of maternal employment on fathers. Many contend that dual-career couples experience increased levels of internal conflict within the family. Pleck, Staines, and Lang (1980) found that 34% of employed husbands and 37% of employed wives were likely to report that their jobs and families interfered with one another. Having children in the home generates added demands on spouses in dual-income families to share parenting responsibilities; the time necessary to meet child-care necessities must be added to both work schedules. The situation is less of a problem in single-income families in which primary child-care responsibilities are typically delegated to the non-employed spouse.

Flouri and Buchanan (2003) used longitudinal data from the National Child Development Study (NCDS), which attempts to track the development of 17,000 British born children born in 1958 within one week of each other, to explore various components of fathers' involvement with their children. Three developmental stages were studied: early childhood (age 7), middle childhood, (age 11), and adolescence (age 16).

Using data from the NCDS, the researchers studied relationships between fathers' involvement with children and child's characteristics, contextual factors, father's characteristics, mother's characteristics, and the co-parental relationship. Flouri and Buchanan found that maternal education predicted some aspects of fathers' involvement with their 7-year olds. Maternal employment was inversely related to father's level of interest in the child's education at age 7 and 11. This is surprising, since fathers are usually expected to be more involved with childcare in families where mothers work fulltime.

Based on data obtained from two manufacturing plants in the United States, Elloy and Flynn (1998) examined levels of organization commitment and the job involvement of single-income and dual-income couples. The results indicated no difference in the levels of job involvement and organization commitment between dual-career and single-career families. Additional analyses were conducted to examine the impact of children on parents' job involvement and organization commitment. The results indicated that the employees from dual-income families with children had levels of organization commitment and job involvement similar to those employees of dual-income families without children. The results of the Elloy and Flynn (1998) study indicate that after controlling for occupational status, there are no differences in the levels of job involvement and organization commitment between individuals in dual-income and single-income families.

In another study assessing dual income families, Broom (1998) had 71 couples of either dual-income or single-income status who had recently had their first child agree to be studied for marital quality, psychological well-being, and parental sensitivity. Assessments were conducted when the child was 3 months old and again when the child was 2.5 years old. Forty of the original 71 couples were available for the second phase of the study. The objective of this study was to determine whether parental sensitivity differs in single-earner and dual-earner families. The results indicated that at the 3-month mark, employed mothers were more sensitive to their children than unemployed mothers. No differences in sensitivity emerged at the 2.5 years assessment. When children were 2.5 years in age, dual-earner parents had lower marital quality than single-earner parents. Marital quality was positively associated with parental sensitivity at both phases of the study. It was concluded that regardless of the employment status of the mother, well-educated middle-class parents tended to provide more sensitive parenting. Marital quality and psychological well being were found to be very important for sensitive parenting for both dual-earner and single-earner families.

Various methodological limitations have compromised the work in this area. For example, many studies rely heavily on questionnaire data rather than on more objective, behavioral observations. Researchers often use unrepresentative samples, which limits generalizability. In addition, many of these correlational studies are followed by the confounding of maternal employment with such variables as marital status, employment status, and social class. Instead of discerning direct causal effects of maternal employment on children, most research describes effects that are probably mediated by a large number of child, parent, familial and social variables.

Early studies examining maternal employment were particularly negligent in handling confounds relating to poverty. Several of them studies concluded that maternal employment negatively affected children, when in reality these negative effects were most likely attributable to the lower socioeconomic status of the employed mothers, who tend to work out of financial necessity.

Fuller, Caspary, Kagain, Authier, Shih-Cheng Huang, Carroll, & McCarthy (2002) conducted a study dealing specifically with lower income single mothers, in order to eliminate past methodological limitations. With many welfare and family aid programs now emphasizing work for the mother as a key factor in children's social development, it is surprising how little research has been done attempting to quantify the advantages, if any, of maternal employment for poor children. Fuller et al (2002) attempted to address this question by examining 616 single mothers of children 24-42 months of age.

Participants in the Fuller et al. (2002) study were recruited through local welfare offices in three counties. The mothers were given several scales during a 90-120 minute interview. These scales included measures for maternal depression, parenting practices, and a measure for perceived behavior problems in their children. Demographic information and information about previous work experience within the past year were also collected.

The researchers concluded that child development effects resulting from poverty stem from factors related to the mother's wellbeing and that these proximal determinants are influenced more by long-term economic security than by short-term employment. The most consistent relationships between outcomes and maternal employment found in this study were for girls. Female children displayed less aggression and fewer attentiveness problems when their mothers were more engaged in paid work during the past year.

Previous research on attitudes about maternal employment has indicated significant differences among children raised in dual-income versus single-income families (Fleming, Farrell, Fronheiser, DiBlasi, Fields, Eddy, Denis, Hemperly, Strauss, Maggi, & Chambliss, 2003; Farrell, Lindquist, Strauss, Gorton, McCauley, Nyce, Johnson, Covert, Maggi, Fields, Eddy, Black, Denis, & Chambliss, 2003; Gambone, Gelband, Farrell, Black, Szuchyt, Aivazian, Lang, Nyce, Johnson, Thomas, Arena, Weiner, Zohe, Cane, & Chambliss, 2002). Most of these studies have found a strong loyalty effect. Children tend to express attitudes that support their own family's lifestyle. An examination of parents' attitudes would help to clarify whether all members of dual-income versus single-income families hold similar views.

The current investigation assessed the attitudes toward maternal employment among married parents. Responses from fathers and mothers were analyzed separately, and the answers of parents from single-paycheck families and dual-paycheck families were compared.

Method

The participants in this study were 109 female and 96 male married parents. Ninety-four of the women were employed at the time of data collection and 15 were not employed. Seventy-five of the men had wives who were employed and 21 of the men had wives who were non-employed. Households in local urban and suburban neighborhoods were randomly sampled. Married parents were asked to fill out a packet containing various questionnaires assessing aspects of the their lives, how they viewed themselves, and their views on maternal employment. The packet used in this study consisted of five different parts.

In part one, subjects were asked to provide demographic information and to answer questions concerning their career and family. These questions required subjects to disclose information concerning their family employment status, job type, job characteristics, and work preference based on the age of their youngest child. Subjects were also asked 10 questions concerning their attitudes toward their mother and father. These questions required subjects to indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a 4 point Likert scale.

Part two of the packet was made up of the BACMEC questionnaire (Greenberger et al., 1988). The BACMEC is a 24-item scale developed to measure Beliefs About the Consequences of Maternal Employment for Children. The BACMEC included beliefs about both benefits (13 items) and costs (11 items). Studies of five samples (n=375) have demonstrated that the total BACMEC scale and its subscales are highly reliable and have good convergent, divergent, and concurrent validity (Greenberger et al., 1988).

In part three of the packet, subjects were asked to disclose information about their mother's work status at two stages of development. The stages of development were preschool years (birth to 5 years old), and school years (6-18 years old). The subjects were asked to report whether their mothers were employed part-time, fulltime, or not employed outside the home during each stage of development and whether or not their mother worked out of financial necessity. Subjects also disclosed information about their mother's job, indicating whether it was professional, white collar, or blue collar work. Subjects were also asked to indicate whether or not they had been raised in a single parent household.

Results

Directionally adjusted responses to the BACMEC were totaled for each participant to create two summary measures of attitudes toward maternal employment, one assessing perceived benefits and another assessing perceived costs. In subsequent comparisons of parents from single and two-paycheck families, responses from fathers were analyzed separately from those of mothers.

Analyses of Responses from Fathers

Independent samples t-tests were performed to compare the benefits and costs subscale scores for fathers from single paycheck families and those for fathers from two-paycheck families. A significant difference was found for both summary scales. On the benefits subscale, fathers from two-paycheck families perceived greater advantages associated with maternal employment than did fathers from single paycheck families (two-paycheck: $x=47.74$, s.d.=10.61, $n=72$ versus single paycheck: $x=42.33$, s.d.= 8.30, $n=21$; $t=2.15$, $df=91$, $p<.05$). On the costs subscale, fathers from two-paycheck families perceived fewer disadvantages associated with maternal employment than did fathers from single paycheck families (two-paycheck: $x=29.69$, s.d.=11.77, $n=74$ versus single paycheck: $x=36.95$, s.d.= 9.42, $n=21$; $t=2.60$, $df=93$, $p<.05$).

Benefits Subscale Individual Items

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to fathers whose wives were not employed, fathers whose wives were employed were more likely to feel that sons of mothers who work are more likely to develop respect for women.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=2.41$; $df=94$; $p<.05$)
BACMEC Item: Boys whose mothers work are more likely to develop respect for women.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	2.71	1.01	21
Two-paycheck	3.45	1.30	75

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to fathers whose wives were not employed, fathers whose wives were employed were more likely to feel that children of working mothers learn more regard for women's intelligence and competence.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=2.19$; $df=94$; $p<.05$)
BACMEC Item: Children whose mothers work full time outside the home develop more regard for women's intelligence and competence.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	2.86	.91	21
Two-paycheck	3.48	1.21	75

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to fathers whose wives were not employed, fathers whose wives were employed were more likely to feel that children of working mothers learn valuable lessons about people they can depend on.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=2.85$; $df=93$; $p<.01$)
BACMEC Item: Children whose mothers work learn valuable lessons about people they can rely on.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	3.00	.95	21
Two-paycheck	3.76	1.11	74

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to fathers whose wives were not employed, fathers whose wives were employed were more likely to feel that daughters of working mothers are better prepared for being a working mother.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=2.38$; $df=93$; $p<.05$)
BACMEC Item: Daughters of working mothers are better prepared to combine work with motherhood, if they choose to do both.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	3.19	1.07	21
Two-paycheck	3.86	1.16	74

Costs Subscale Individual Items

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to fathers whose wives were employed, fathers whose wives were not employed were more likely to feel that warm and secure relationships with a mother are jeopardized by maternal employment.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=2.07$; $df=94$; $p< .05$)
BACMEC Item: Children are less likely to form a warm and secure relationship with a mother who is working full time.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	3.52	1.40	21
Two-paycheck	2.79	1.45	75

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to fathers whose wives were employed, fathers whose wives were not employed were more likely to feel that children of working mothers suffered from their mothers' perceived lack of availability.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=2.42$; $df=94$; $p<.05$)
BACMEC Item: Children whose mothers work suffer because their mothers are not there when they need them.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	3.67	1.24	21
Two-paycheck	2.88	1.34	75

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to fathers whose wives were employed, fathers whose wives were not employed were more likely to feel that children of working mothers feel that their mothers believe they are not worth paying attention to.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=2.19$; $df=94$; $p<.05$)
BACMEC Item: Children of mothers who work develop lower self-esteem because they think they are not worth devoting attention to.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	2.67	.80	21
Two-paycheck	2.16	.97	75

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to fathers whose wives were employed, fathers whose wives were not employed were more likely to feel that teenagers tended to get into less trouble with the law if their mothers do not work full time.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=2.08$; $df=94$; $p< .05$)
BACMEC Item: Teenagers get into less trouble with the law if their mothers do not work full time outside of the home.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	3.71	1.27	21
Two-paycheck	2.97	1.49	75

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to fathers whose wives were employed, fathers whose wives were not employed were more likely to feel that young children learn more if their mothers stay at home with them.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=3.27$; $df=42.8$; $p<.01$)
BACMEC Item: Young children learn more if their mothers stay at home with them.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	4.33	1.06	21
Two-paycheck	3.40	1.44	75

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to fathers whose wives were employed, fathers whose wives were not employed were more likely to feel that children of working mothers were more likely to be left alone and thus exposed to danger.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=2.51$; $df=94$; $p<.05$)

BACMEC Item: Children whose mothers work are more likely to be left alone and exposed to dangerous situations.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	3.81	1.17	21
Two-paycheck	2.97	1.39	75

An independent samples t-test revealed a trend suggesting that when compared to fathers whose wives were employed, fathers whose wives were not employed were more likely to feel that children whose mothers work do not eat as well as other children.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family fathers
($t=1.98$; $df=94$; $p=.051$)
BACMEC Item: Children of working mothers are less well-nourished and don't eat the way they should.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	2.90	1.04	21
Two-paycheck	2.33	1.20	75

Analyses of Responses from Mothers

Independent samples t-tests were performed to compare the benefits and costs subscale scores for mothers from single paycheck and those for mothers from two-paycheck families. A significant difference was found for the benefits summary scale. On the benefits subscale, mothers from two-paycheck families perceived greater advantages associated with maternal employment than did mothers from single paycheck families (two-paycheck: $x=48.01$, $s.d.=11.51$, $n=91$ versus single paycheck: $x=39.57$, $s.d.= 9.97$, $n=14$; $t=2.60$, $df=103$, $p<.05$). No significant difference was found for the costs summary scale between mothers from single-paycheck and two-paycheck families.

Benefits Subscale Individual Items

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to mothers who did not work, mothers who were employed were more likely to feel that children of working mothers are more independent.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family mothers
($t=3.50$; $df=107$; $p<.001$)
BACMEC Item: Children whose mothers work are more independent and able to do things for themselves.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	3.00	1.36	15
Two-paycheck	4.11	1.11	94

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to mothers who did not work, mothers who were employed were more likely to feel that boys whose mothers work are more likely to develop respect for women.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family mothers
($t=2.78$; $df=106$; $p<.01$)
BACMEC Item: Boys whose mothers work are more likely to develop respect for women.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	2.40	1.12	15
Two-paycheck	3.40	1.31	93

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to mothers who did not work, mothers who were employed were more likely to feel that children of working mothers develop more regard for women's intelligence and competence.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family mothers
($t=2.97$; $df=106$; $p<.01$)
BACMEC Item: Children whose mothers work full time outside the home develop more regard for women's intelligence and competence.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	2.53	1.06	15
Two-paycheck	3.57	1.28	93

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to mothers who did not work, mothers who were employed were more likely to feel that children of working mothers adapt better to change.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family mothers
($t=2.33$; $df=$; $p<.05$)
BACMEC Item: Children whose mothers work full time outside the home are more adaptable; they cope better with the unexpected and with changes in plans.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	3.07	1.16	15
Two-paycheck	3.83	1.17	92

Costs Subscale Individual Items

An independent samples t-test revealed that when compared to mothers who did work, mothers who were not employed were more likely to feel that children whose mothers work are more likely to engage in risky behaviors.

Independent samples t-test comparisons of single and two-paycheck family mothers
($t=1.97$; $df=106$; $p<.05$)
BACMEC Item: Children of working mothers are more likely to experiment with drugs, alcohol and sex at an early age.

	Mean	s.d.	N
Single Paycheck	3.07	1.10	15
Two-paycheck	2.38	1.26	93

Discussion

This study found that the participants' attitudes about maternal employment were congruent with their lifestyles. It is unknown whether this is because the participants' beliefs shaped their family choices, or if living a certain lifestyle shaped participants' attitudes on these matters. For instance, a woman whose husband is a firm believer that maternal employment is harmful to children may find herself not working even though she might like to be employed outside the home. This woman, then, could gradually shift her views to a philosophy more in praise of mothers staying at home in order to reduce the cognitive dissonance she may feel.

It appears that on many of the BACMEC items the participants' answered, the responses from men whose wives did not work were outliers from the rest of the groups. This seems to have particularly been the case on items which pertained to danger to the children of working mothers (children getting in trouble with the law, children engaging in risky behaviors) and risks involving care of the child by the mother (children developing a warm and secure relationship with mother, children suffering because mother is not there when she is needed, children learning more if mother does not work). This could be demonstrative of high levels of anxiety in fathers living in single paycheck households, or it could be the case that fathers whose wives do not work feel comfortable in the traditional breadwinner role already, and accordingly shift their views of maternal employment to justify this division of responsibilities within the family.

The findings of this study suggest that parents from single-paycheck and two-paycheck families significantly differ from each other in terms of the costs and benefits for children they perceive as being associated with maternal employment. Each group seemed to have somewhat different concerns and beliefs about maternal employment and its effects.

Fathers with wives who worked, for instance, seemed to respond most positively to questions concerning children developing an egalitarian view of the roles of men and women (boys developing respect for women, children holding esteem for women's intelligence and competence) and to questions regarding the preparedness of the child for entering the "real world" (learning about who can be relied upon, daughters being prepared to combine work with motherhood should they choose to do so). The concern about children viewing men and women as equals may stem from a long held belief about such equality or may have been a later acquired idea among these men if their wives were working out of necessity. The ideas about having a working mother showing children the "How-Tos" of life may come from a concern these fathers have about children being capable and independent when entering the working world.

Fathers with wives who were full time mothers revealed their concerns about problems with child supervision in two-paycheck families (teenagers getting in trouble with the law, children being left alone and exposed to danger), maternal attachment to children (children developing a warm relationship with mother, children suffering due to mother not being there when needed, children developing lower self-esteem when mother works), and basic care-taking of the children (children learning more if mother stays at home, children of working mothers being under-nourished). These concerns reveal possible feelings among these fathers that a

mother's role is to watch over the children, protecting them and being emotionally available to them. Considering the "traditional" background of these families, this view is not surprising.

Mothers who worked showed their beliefs that maternal employment produced favorable views in children about women (boys developing respect for women, children having regard for women's intelligence and competence), and produced independence and coping skills in children (children being more able to do things on their own, children being able to deal with changes). These results would seem to indicate that mothers who work feel that a working mother is a positive role model for children to look up to in order to learn how to function effectively in the world and viewing women with respect. It is also possible, of course, that these women either worked out of necessity or chose to work and then adopted views which held working mothers in a positive regard.

Mothers who did not work only scored significantly different from mothers who did work on one cost item. This item had to do with children of working mothers engaging in experimentation with drugs, alcohol, and sex at an early age. This would seem to show a propensity in stay-at-home mothers to feel that staying at home makes them better able to protect their children from the dangers of the world. The fact that stay-at-home mothers only responded differently from working mothers on one cost item may also reflect the growing acceptance of maternal employment in society and among women in particular.

These findings are not particularly surprising. All groups seemed to feel that their family's situation regarding employment status was more desirable for children's well being than the alternative. Surely many people are defensive when asked about their family status, given the costs associated with maternal employment (whether real or imagined) and, more recently, the stigma sometimes associated with wives who do not work. The desire to validate one's family situation almost certainly played a role in the subjects' answering of the BACMEC items.

It would seem that further research in this area is warranted in order to determine why the differences exist among these specified groups. Clarifying the extreme responses of fathers from single-paycheck families may be particularly helpful to those interested in helping couples make mutually satisfying decisions about how to negotiate responsibilities within the family.

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Title: Married Parents' Perceptions of the Specific Costs and Benefits Associated with Maternal Employment

Author(s): F.P. ; , A. Fronheiser, K. Baker, L. Allegar, A. Hess, J. Kosctoski, et al.

Corporate Source: Ursinus College

Publication Date: 2003

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Printed Name/Position/Title: Catherine Chambliss, Ph.D., Chair, Psychology

Organization/Address: Dept. of Psychology
Ursinus College
Collegeville, PA 19426

Telephone: (610) 409 3000

FAX: (610) 489 0627

E-Mail Address: cchambliss@ursinus.edu

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